

# Exhibition of Works by Old Lyme Artists

Held as Usual at Public Library by Group of Painters Now Organized Under the Name of Lyme Art Association.

## ART AT HOME AND ABROAD

Subjects Chosen for Treatment Range All the Way From Typical New England Scenes to Fifth Avenue and Spain.

OLD LYME is holding her annual exhibition again regardless of wars and rumors of wars. The attempt to raise money enough for an art gallery was not fully successful, although a site has been purchased and stands ready for the building. The pictures are shown on former occasions in the Public Library, to the support of which the admission fees are dedicated.

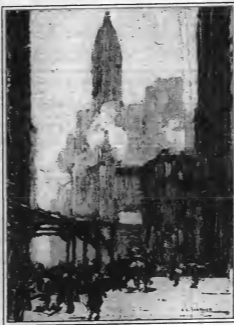
However inadequate for the fulfillment of their ambitions the artists may consider these annual and unpretentious quarters, it is reasonably certain that the public gets more enjoyment from the exhibition than if it were held in a modern hall, with indirect lighting and a pretty-colored gallery. The splendid quality of the modern picture gallery is much to be deplored. It is like the too perfect butter, who so thoroughly idealizes himself that you cannot shake off the over-consciousness of him. The modern gallery gets out of the way with a tact so impeccable to let you enjoy the pictures that you are unconsciously unable to do your part. The point is, of course, that pictures are not made for exhibition galleries, or if so are hardly worth the making. There should be a certain intimacy between the picture and its environment, a certain sense of belonging, fastened of which the poor things are hung in rows, in a discreet and uncommensurate setting, like nothing so much as orphan children waiting to be adopted.

The absence of this apparent aloofness and formality is what given to the Old Lyme exhibitions their character and charm. There is nothing about the surroundings more picturesque than one ever from New England. Cows and grass and water, gray buildings in the pasture, old white frame houses along the broad streets, subtle suggestions of possible Colonial mahogany and Paul Revere silver within doors; without, a sky that keeps its tone uniformly, showing patches of robin's egg blue beneath its fleecy drapery of cloud. That is about all there is to it.

The artists return year after year, and the landscape becomes a part of the life of each. Each could say with the Socratic Gypsy: "I know those slopes. Who knows them if not I?" The same problems present themselves year after year for solution; the same, yet so varied under their familiarity as the needs of your best companions.

If, then, the Old Lyme group feels that it must have a new Lyme Gallery, having achieved the corporate title, "Lyme Art Association," and having secured a site near Miss Griswold's—the very heart of the colony—it should see to it that the building erected be in proper Colonial style, an integral part of the landscape, and sympathetic to the pictures of the landscape that will hang in it. Otherwise visitors will regret the good old days when the exhibition was held in the library, with windows always shaded by green trees, and not a vestige of a publicity committee.

If no more all the pictures shown at the Lyme exhibition are local subjects. They range from Fifth Avenue, New York, to Coenca, Spain. A fair proportion



"The Singer Building," by Everett L. Warner. (In the Exhibition of the Lyme Art Association.)

of the collection, however, are at least of Connecticut origin. Lucien Abrams, a newcomer to the colony, has a picture which he names "A Garden in Lyme," and which is hung, most conspicuously, on the first landing of the stairway. It is an old New England garden seen with the eyes of modern France, eyes that have noted stolidity, so doubt, on the work of Coeneca, but the pictorial result has both energy and freshness. And the tangle of unconsidered pillars and rods and beams and purple in the garden bloom gains by the stylistic treatment. Without losing character, it achieves dignity. There is character, also, in the background hill and tower in spite of the certain barren foliage that gives no exultant a look to trace in the paintings of the modern French school.

"In the Hop Yard," by Wilson Irvine, shows a truly Whistlerian indifference to the variety of the piddle. The title seems to have little enough to do with this mass of cloven and disrupted rock, over which plunges a little torrent of white water. But the intentioned lack that the unpurposized title should have read, "The Devil's Hopyard," with reference to a place a few miles distant from Lyme in the true wilds of Connecticut, untouched by any railroad, even the adventurous tracks of the Blackball Branch slyly away from it. The artist has marshaled and arranged the various planes of the rocks with such knowledge and a highly accomplished draughtsmanship. The complication of the original reduced to singularity in this rarest of effective manner irresistibly recalls Sergeant's method of dealing with similar problems.

Everett L. Warner's "An Old-Fashioned Dooryard," which presents after the candid habit of this painter the full face of a salient old house front to the observer, is a true Lyme subject, a hump-roofed house with lilacs pressing

confidently against it, and green branches flickering in the quiet sunlight. Mr. Warner's insight into close relations of tone and his ability to embody the spirit of a scene in scrupulously just representation of its external features make his pictures peculiarly satisfying to those of us who like freshness without brutality, sensitiveness without weakness.

In a much less flexible language, Brata Longene presents somewhat the same discriminating sense of faint changes in the colors and tones of things.

Frank Dickelall is happiest in his unpretentious porch shadowed by Dorothy Perkins' room, William S. Robinson has his "Meadow Brook," and the translucent delicacy of the masses, portrayed to his "Spring." Clark G. Vanhook, also, has sought the positive poetry of the early year in his "Joy of Spring." Each artist has seen the world through a veil of gold and purple. George M. Branslie in

"Winter Afternoon" is dedicated to a black and brooding mood of nature. The white cloud piled in his dark sky glows fiercely in contrast. Mattie Browne in "The Poplars" has used a loose, loose brush stroke that seems to express the character of the trees as fleetingly as she expresses the character of her own and sheep in the sketches shown in the upper room of the Library. She has the quickest of eyes for the significant revealing gesture or detail of form.

Will Howe paints in unusually character in "The Mill Dam." Colors and water have a brisk movement and the color is agreeable. His "Autumn on the Lieutenant" shows his favorite tone decked out in cloth-of-gold for his benefit.

There are several cattle pictures, an usual. William H. Howe drives his rather sombre herd under a dusky sky. Carlotta Watkins continues to group him now according to nature, and persistently facing both ways. John Turcas anoints his "Gray Day in Spring" with felicitous touches of blue. Henry R. Tocco strikes an unfamiliar note in his "bustones, bright flecks of color in a low-toned landscape. There is a nice effect of sunlight in Harry Hoffman's "Crown, Spain," and Flett Hubbard, another newcomer, strikes a pleasant note of color as "Montage Bay, Jamaica." Edward F. Cook is massive and gray in his "Hologna."

Two artists are represented by pictures under which are placed crossed palms, the memory. One is Lewis Cohen, the other Frederic W. Ramsdell. Both died this Spring. Mr. Cohen's large picture of the Port Saint Michel recalls his student period under Lacroix. The large calm surfaces, the simple, permanent features of the scene emphasized, the treatment unadorned, these were qualities in the art of Lacroix and are prominent in Mr. Cohen's art. "The Chastant Tree" and "October," by Mr. Ramsdell, are not less characteristic of their author.

Several views of New York are in the exhibition. A brightly snow scene by Guy C. Wiggins, looking in atmosphere in the distance, but with a remarkably fine foreground. Edmund Green's sketches of snowy streets are carried less far, but give a lively impression of weather.

The figure painters find their account in working directly from their models posed out of doors, with the classic line of the classical playing upon varied textures. Robert Tolman, recently entered in the Old Lyme group, has done something rather unusual in giving equal importance to the problems



"Winter Afternoon," by George M. Branslie. (In Exhibition of the Lyme Art Association.)



"Canterbury Bells and Parglows," by Harry L. Hoffman. (In Exhibition of Lyme Art Association.)

of characterization and those of light and shade. The little figure in a yellow sweater grasping the branch of a tree with a well-drawn muscular young head is a real person with definite individuality in the sharply marked eyebrows and long cheeks, but the translucent shadow on the flesh and the sense of air floating about the small head are given their due importance. Mr. Hoffman's other figure study is not quite so blithe and fresh in feeling.

Mr. Greenan's lovely girl arranging flowers on a window seat is in his characteristic pallid tones, the lights and darks reduced in order not to disturb the artistic envelope. The result is delicate and sensitive. Mr. Bittlinger paints reflected light falling on a velvet lady whose long skirt divides the canvas diagonally with a bold, sweeping line.

Mr. Barr's girl among the flowers-de-lis, of course, a variation of youth and flowers and other conventional elements of the subject, but the snapping freshness of the air and the decorative splashing of the foreground with the iris blue are the picture by a break subject by the same artist shows an even more powerful organization of color values and appreciation of lesser character. Yet get from it the truth of the scene—not water, ambient air, foliage through which flows sap—without the teasing obvious realism prone to dig the footsteps of truth.

There is one miniature by Lydia Longene, and a still life by Florence Dow. Four figures by Beatie Potter Vanebo in the centre of the room make a pleasant diversion in the place previously followed in the exhibition.

Upstairs the sketches are grouped with brilliant effect, not in the least resembling the new conventional "Thinker Exhibitions." They are made for fun and for study, serious and blithe, and are rather more rewarding than the works on view below, from which a little of the first freshness of impression inevitably has departed.

#### Book Illustrations of the Present Day in England.

A special number of *The Studio* is devoted to modern book illustrations in England, and the survey made shows how high the general level has been during the past sixty years. In America we have had so much moment of high inspiration as occurred in the late action when the pre-Raphaelites took up the task of feeding the wood block with their rich imaginings. Since then, with many deviations from the narrow path of appropriate page decoration, and with many lapses from the standard set by the masters of illustration, the art has on the whole main-

tained its dignified fidelity of present-day, rendered in late pleasure in the creative use of the wood engraver, and the latter has attempted to stretch the possibilities of his material to the utmost, achieving in such results on those produced by Mr. Wolf and Mr. Cole an amazing reproduction of the characteristic qualities of painting and other forms of art.

In the immediate present a school of wood engravers has appeared, more independent of compromise, stimulated by the imperishable art of the early Germans, and bent upon restoring to the woodcut the force of its first youth. Materially, these last work for a limited public and have not yet reached the multitude for whom the process of the printing room revolves at top speed.

Even this multitude, however, is gaining a sense of the bolder and more personal effects in illustration achieved by modern artists entering that field. The feeble half-tone is yielding to the line cut, and there is hope that another generation may see the book, the magazine, the weekly journal in something resembling unity of style. The bold illustration will, it may be hoped, rebuke and react upon the feeble type, and it will be generally seen that even soft paper and a cheap process can yield beauty of effect in proportion to the recognition paid to these limitations.

The history of book illustration in England holds much encouragement for the future of that branch of art in which expression goes hand in hand with decoration. Beginning with Macon's "Tennyson" of 1847, one sees in the group of brilliant minds marshaled to that simple enterprise a collective talent absolutely allied to its purpose. Milnes, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti all were born to illustration, the last, especially, taking the themes of his most important pictures from literature and keeping them steadily in the spirit of the original in his passionate translation. The process of wood engraving in the hands of Linson and Dalziel carved even such proud intellects, however, and reduced them to one theme. To translate the beautiful plain in that deity little speech-making quarts is to recognize at once the family resemblance existing among them. To glance at the paintings of the three men, or at photographs of the paintings, is to realize how largely this resemblance was due to the convention of the wood block. This convention was strong to serve when it came to printing on coarse paper, and no one who has seen the magnificent series of the *Parables* drawn by Millais for "Good Words" can find fault with the rendering of the superb designs. Other illustrators of the period were Frederick Sandys, "one of the greatest masters of black-and-white of any time, and a living influence to-day," Arthur Boyd Houghton, Frederick Waller, and George John Pinwell, Twiss, De Maistre, Frederick Schickel, Rusec Solomon, and John Gilbert.

As in other special periods of development in art, other followers have. Edmund Colclough, Kate Greenaway, and Walter Crane are the memorable trio dedicated to the colored picture book for children. Walter Crane is still an influence, and the source of pleasure in this land wherever his books find their way to nurseries. He was influenced by Italy and Japan, by the *Mauro* "Tennyson" for the pictures of which he conceived the poems, and by the Greek sculptures in the British Museum. All these influences are traced clearly in his work, yet their mingling has none of the cold eclecticism to be expected. "A fresh, direct vision, a quickly stimulated imagination, a love of symbolic and typical form with a touch of poetic suggestion, a delight in form, gay color and a responsiveness to the variations of line and contrast of form—these are some of the characteristics of the child, whether grown up or not." Walter Crane thus analyzed the child's temper of mind, and first *Walt* the qualities found in his illustrated books—those marvelous chattering books—are sympathy with this mental attitude. In addition he gave us a profusion of the well-considered and beautiful detail which happily, engages the mind of youth, a color harmony admirably adapted to the crudities of printer's ink, and a unity of impression found nowhere else in low-priced publications.

A few years ago he wrote for the *Art Journal* a description of the way in which the "Baby's Opera" was made, the first of a more ambitious series. The well-known engraver and printer, Edmund Evans, had brought printing in color to a new efficiency, and his craftsmanship made possible an artistic execution. The studios for the designs were made in a studio surrounded by an old garden and orchards and meadows filled with plant and animal life now "cleared off the face of the earth by an electric railway." He says: "My sister, who had supplied most of the renderings in verse of the old nursery tales to fit into the little tablets left for the legend on my top-book pictures, collected and arranged the tunes, but only music type was used. I made the pictures and the borders, and Mr. Evans did the printing. The price was 6 shillings, but there was no gold on the cover! The book was weighed in 'the trade' balance and found wanting; in fact, 'it would never do.' The public, however, thought differently. An edition of 15,000 was immediately sold out and another was called for, and the book has been in demand ever since, having reached its fifteenth thousand."

It was the intimacy of this work, the happy, free expression of an artist working out his ideas without ceremony or drudging, stated in the excellent printing, that found the public taste ready to meet it.



"Fly-Time," by Mathias Browne. (In Exhibition of Lyme Art Association.)